BSc Social Work - Semester 2 SSLC

Present: Jackie Gulland (Programme Director); Lucy Greenbank (Year 2); CJ Janes (Year 2); Will Rennie (Student Adviser)

Apologies: Michael Warrington (Year 3)

Intro

- JG noted that we don't have a year 1 or year 4 rep, which we'll try to address from Welcome Week onwards. In the case of year 4s, Jackie is often aware of their circumstances and receives feedback on a variety of issues as they arise. It would be good to have a rep in future though.
- Review of minutes from semester 1 SSLC :
    - JG: most action points were to be addressed next academic year. Any points to come back to?
        - CJ & LG: no points to return to
    - JG: original plan for this meeting was for February, so that action could be taken before the end of teaching, but was disrupted due to strike action. Apologies for the delay.

Points for this Meeting

- Nothing from year 1 at this point in absence of year 1 reps.

Year 2

- CJ: 2 elective courses have been mentioned as candidates to be made compulsory:
    - Intro to Disability Studies: really good course for understanding the complexities of different disabilities and, for students entering the workspaces which they'll be entering, it's good to have this general understanding in advance
    - Creative Social Work and the Arts: good to see the different perspectives which Social Work can come from.
        - JG: Creative Social Work and the Arts had to be suspended during the pandemic as it was too great a demand on staff time, which was possible as it was not compulsory. However, making it compulsory has been considered.

          Intro to Disability Studies: we are interested in this course which is run by the School of Health in Social Science and whether we might develop a social science version in the future. In the mean time it is good to know that it has been a useful elective course for social work students.

          There are pros and cons to making courses compulsory, however, as it limits student choice and can create a different level of stress. But it's good to know what's been enjoyed, and it's helpful feedback.

- LG: there have been concerns about strikes and a potential marking boycott which the cohort would be grateful for further information about.
    - JG: when it comes to the exam boards, Course Organisers will be asked to make an impact statement about how strikes affected their courses. This will cover whether assignments can be disregarded if they were impacted by strikes or account taken in assessing outcomes. We regret the disruption, and the University's position is that no student should be negatively impacted by strikes.

      The union (UCU) has notified the University that there will be a marking boycott, but further details aren't available right now. There is always the possibility that this will be avoided, but concerns should really be taken up with University management.
        - LG: where the boycott may start will be just when some marks are due to be returned. This is a particular stress for students.

        - JG: fully appreciate this. It should be said though that the dispute is with the employer, and there is no dispute between academic staff and students.
        - LG: everyone understands the reasoning behind the strikes, but unfortunately it's the Social Work courses (with the elevated hurdle of 50%) that have been the most stressful element. We hope that students will get their results back.
        - JG: unfortunately, it's not possible to say much from an individual position. It may not be helpful to know, but it's stressful for staff as well.

- LG: in year 3, what insurance will students need to drive their own vehicles to and from placement?
    - JG: this should be directed to the Practice Learning team, as they may be more familiar with the details. When going on placement, each student will be consulted as to the suitability of where they are placed.

- JG: anything else?
    - CJ: do you know if Avril will continue being our PT?
        - JG: The PT system is changing and we won't have PTs anymore. Rather, students will have two points of contact: WR for anything except strictly academic questions, and a Cohort Lead (yet to be allocated). In Social Work, we're also in negotiation with the University to have a new role - currently referred to as an Academic Supervisor - who students can contact when on placement and for dissertation support.

          JG also has research leave during semester 1, so somebody else will be covering as Programme Director in the interim. This person may also be a Cohort Lead.

          One other thing to say is that we're a small team in Social Work, and we try to help where we can. Some staff have been off over this year, and there has been some uncertainty about who has been doing what, but please do continue to come to someone on the team and we'll help as much as we can.

- CJ: would it be possible to have an overview of placement at about this time (early April) in the year? Students have differing personal circumstances so it would be good to have advance opportunity to consider the sorts of things which may need to be considered. It would also be useful to have advance info about the opportunity for overseas placements.
    - JG: **will feed this back to the Practice Learning team** and we will post information on the Learn Hub so that 2nd year students have information about what to expect in year 3. In year 3, there are slots in the timetable set aside for Practice Learning information sessions, but this is very good feedback.
    - CJ: it might be useful to have the contact details of the PL team signposted a bit more clearly.
        - [JG copied PL team e-mail address into chat of meeting]

- LG: some students are still not happy that they won't be able to continue in their jobs in year 3, and they feel this should be possible. Students knew this when they signed up, and the information was there, but they would like this to change if possible. Don't believe anything can be done by Social Work, but wanted to raise it.
    - JG: several responses to this. The official response is that this is a full-time programme, and students are expected to commit to this. In relation to placement, there is a regulatory requirement as part of this programme to complete a certain number of hours on placement.
        - LG: I think the students are looking at what is possible at other Universities.
    - JG: we're very aware of student hardship, and will try and support students whenever we can.
        - LG: a bursary for Social Work students would make life a lot easier – paramedic students receive something similar, for example.
        - CJ: believe there is one, but for students living in Scotland.
        - LG: yes, but there are certain criteria that must be met in order for this to be possible. This isn't the case for paramedics.

        - JG: absolutely right to bring this up. Other social work students in Scotland have sent a petition to the Scottish Government calling for exactly this, and as a student body this is where to put the pressure on.
    - JG: although we don't encourage it because of the huge demand it puts on students, some do continue on part-time jobs while on placement. This isn't forbidden, although University work must be prioritised because placement is effectively a full-time job. The Student Advice and Support team are also available to direct students to further support. Appreciate this isn't a wholly satisfactory response, but placement has to be done in a certain way.
        - CJ: it might be helpful to have this acknowledged more openly. It would help students to know more explicitly that this is understood, either from academic staff or from SAS team. This could avoid students feeling isolated when considering placement or when considering what they're able to manage.
        - LG: agreed. An information guide for incoming year 3s would be very good: e-mail addresses, expectations, overseas placement info etc. A meeting would also be helpful.
        - CJ: agreed. Either the start of semester or March would be a good time to have this info.

- CJ: better use could be made of the Learn Hub, for easier access to information. Could there also be the chance to speak to current year 3s or year 4s about placement?
    - JG: this is really helpful. The Hubs were new this year and we're trying not to overload students with too much info. The programme handbook is there which may cover some of the above. However, a brief guide there also could be arranged. **JG will discuss as part of the Programme Director handover.**
- CJ: has there been any developments in the Social Work Society?
    - JG: current year 3 students were taking the lead on that before Christmas, and I believe the numbers were there in order to establish the society, but haven't heard since then. They may require a bit of support from current year 1s and 2s to get it going for next year. **JG will chase this up.**

AOB

- JG: Michael 3rd year rep (in absentia) sent some points in for consideration.

  Regarding placement, these will be passed on to the PL team. If there are concerns about placements, students really should get back to the PL team or their Academic Supervisor immediately, because these roles are designed for placement support.

  In regards to variability of feedback and support from PTs, will need to get back to Michael regarding his specific concerns. However, **JG will pass this on to Course Organisers**. There's been some difficulty providing cover for staff members who have been on long-term sick leave, which is no excuse, but if there are concerns about consistency we'll try to do this better in the new model of student support. **JG will reply to Michael directly as well.**

Thanks

- would like to thank all of you, and Michael in his absence, for being shining examples of what student representation should be.
    - LG: should add that students are looking forward to year 3. There's a lot of happy chatter among the cohort in addition to what's been raised above.